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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

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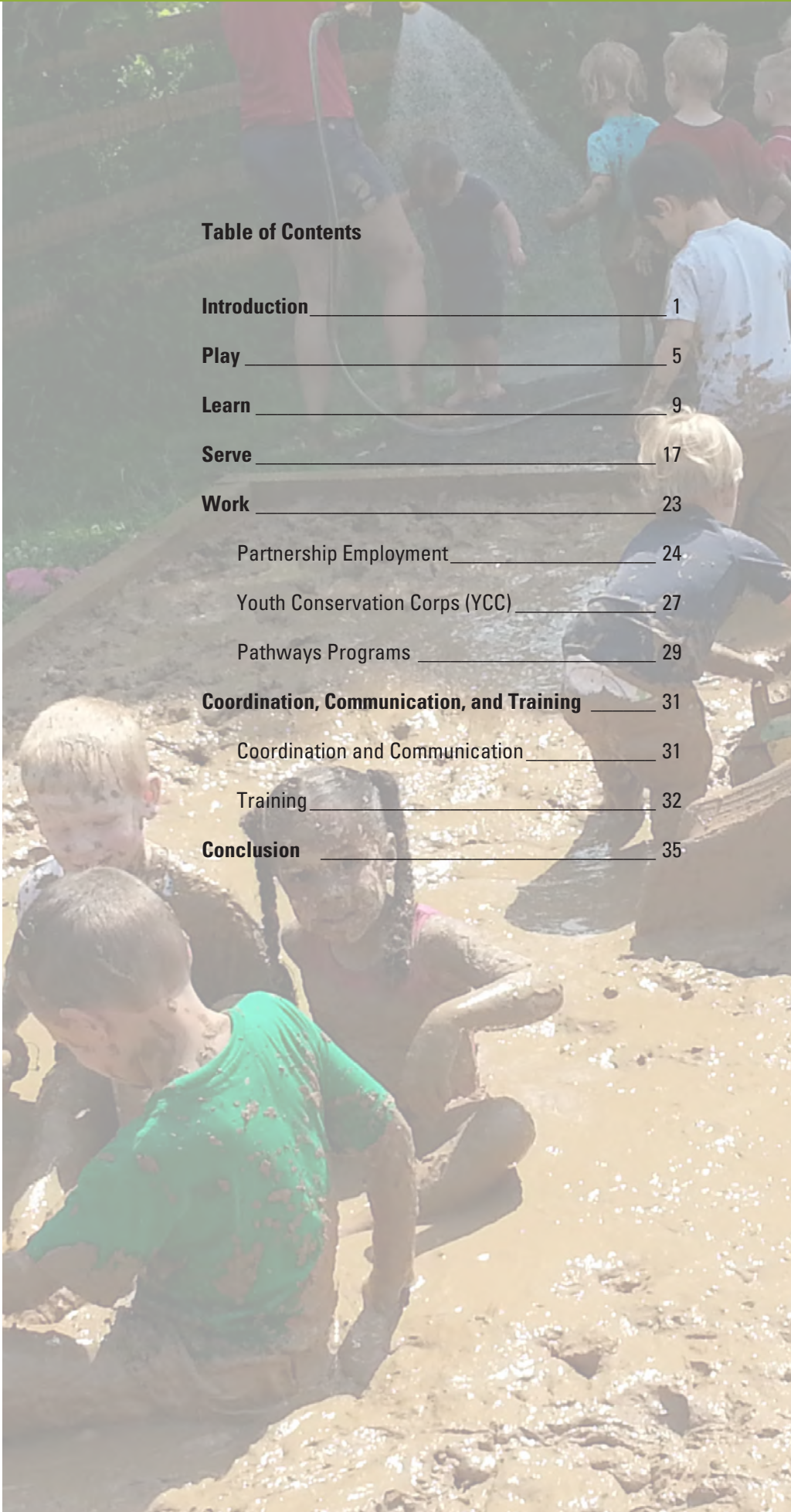
March 2015



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Youth in the Great Outdoors

2014 Annual Report

A photograph of several children playing in a muddy stream. One child in the foreground is wearing a green shirt and has mud on their face. Other children are in the background, some with their backs to the camera. The water is murky and brown with mud.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Youth in the Great Outdoors

2014 Annual Report

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Contributors

Region 1 (R1)

Bob Peyton

Region 2 (R2)

Gary Hutchison

Region 3 (R3)

Ann Marie Chapman

Region 4 (R4)

Garry Tucker

Region 5 (R5)

Kate Toniolo

Region 6 (R6)

Amy Thornburg

Region 7 (R7)

Kristen Gilbert

Region 8 (R8)

Dara Rodriguez

Headquarters (HQ)

Budget Planning and Human Capital

Kim Howze, Ginger Nethery,
Alisa Ballew Rawlins

*Diversity and Inclusive Workforce
Management*

Julia Bumbaca

Ecological Services

Lewis Gorman

Fish and Aquatic Conservation

Bob Pos, Denise Wagner

Migratory Bird Program

Alicia King

National Conservation Training Center

Kathy Sholl, Managing Editor
Werner Barz, Drew Burnett,
Steve Chase, Michelle Donlan,
Blaine Eckberg, Nate Hawley,
Georgia Jeppesen, Dawn Lagrotteria,
Chelsea McKinney, Jim Siegel, and
Kristin Simanek, Graphic Design

National Wildlife Refuge System

Phil LePelch, Marcia Pradines

Introduction

In March 2014 Secretary Jewell issued *Order Number 3332 Engaging the Next Generation*, instructing the Department of the Interior (DOI) bureaus to build upon the outstanding work and programs already operating at local offices and units around the country, and pursue a comprehensive strategy to encourage millions of young people to play, learn, serve, and work outdoors. The order also identified specific goals as follows:

1. Play: The DOI will develop or enhance outdoor recreation partnerships in 50 cities over the next four years to create new, systemic opportunities for outdoor play for more than 10 million young people.

2. Learn: Provide educational opportunities to at least 10 million of the nation's K-12 student population annually. In addition to welcoming students into nature's classroom, we are developing and strengthening new online education resources to reach more students.

3. Serve: Engage one million volunteers annually on public lands, effectively tripling the numbers the DOI has now. In order to achieve the volunteer goal, we will place a renewed emphasis on volunteer coordination and management.

4. Work: To develop the next generation of lifelong conservation stewards and ensure our own skilled and diverse workforce pipeline, DOI will provide 100,000 work and training opportunities to young people within our bureaus and through public-private partnerships.

Engaging the next generation is a critically important strategy for achieving the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) conservation mission. We are challenged as never before to ensure our relevance in a rapidly changing America. Awareness and support are essential so that Americans will care about conservation and the work we do to safeguard the Nation's natural resources. We must connect with rural audiences as well as the ever-growing ethnically and racially diverse urban youth population. This becomes increasingly crucial as young



Service Director Dan Ashe meets Dolly, the nation's first California condor ambassador.

“Investing in America’s next generation is critical, so we are creating new ways to engage young audiences in outdoor experiences, both on wildlife refuges and partner lands. With 80 percent of the U.S. population currently residing in urban communities, helping urban dwellers rediscover the outdoors is a priority for the Service.”

*- Dan Ashe, Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*

people spend less time outdoors, thus losing touch with nature.

The Service has a multifaceted approach to align the Engaging the Next Generation priority with other Service priorities, increase our relevancy, and continue our long and rich tradition of engaging the next generation. One of the most promising efforts the Service undertook in FY 2014 was establishing an Urban Wildlife Conservation Program to encourage all employees to engage urban communities in fish and wildlife conservation.

The Urban Wildlife Conservation Program (UWCP)

The UWCP has two components:

- **Urban Wildlife Refuges** – These units of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) are open to the public within 25 miles of an urban area in a community with a population of at least 250,000 people. They have the potential to host large numbers of visitors from diverse backgrounds and provide the opportunity to engage urban audiences with fish and wildlife conservation.
- **Urban Partnerships** – Long-term collaborations between the Service and partners (e.g., non-profits, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local municipalities) that work to engage urban audiences in fish and wildlife conservation and to build understanding of our mission. There are several categories of partnerships:
 - **Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnerships** – Long-term place-based partnerships that engage urban communities in conservation issues on lands that the Service does not own or govern. Any Service office may develop an Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership.
 - **Urban Conservation Partnerships** – Long-term cooperative arrangements between Service offices and local outside organizations that engage urban communities in fish and wildlife conservation not tied to a particular place.
 - **Urban Bird Treaty Program Cities** – Cooperative arrangements between the Service, city governments, and their partners working together to enhance urban habitats for birds and other wildlife. The goal is to enhance citizen awareness of conserving and enhancing natural resources in their communities and nationwide.

In FY 2014, the Service offered a comprehensive array of programming for youth that encompassed the play, learn, serve, and work goals outlined in the Secretary’s order. These programs reached millions of young people and are integrated deeply throughout the agency from field stations, fish hatcheries, and national wildlife refuges, to regional and national program offices. It bears mentioning that this work has not been without its challenges. Extremely tight budgets and limited staff resources required the Service to increasingly turn to partnerships and volunteers to help achieve our youth

programming goals. In some instances, there was insufficient capacity to support partnership work or to adequately oversee volunteers. An additional complication is the effective and timely use of myriad old and new youth employment authorities available to hiring managers for employing young people after they've been engaged and educated in conservation and the mission of the Service.

The Service reached millions of young people with our programs in Fiscal Year (FY) 2014. This report highlights the work accomplished across the Service,

at the field, regional and national office levels. These are only a small sampling of the Service’s efforts and commitment to build lifelong conservation stewards. As young people are our future conservation leaders, youth engagement is critical for the continued stewardship of the natural resources the Service conserves, protects, and enhances.

One of the top priorities of the Youth in the Great Outdoors initiative is to increase participation of diverse, tribal, veteran, or other underserved audiences. Watch for highlights of diversity programs and activities in the blue side-bars and textboxes.



www.youthgo.gov

PLAY

48.5 million people hunted, fished, observed or photographed wildlife at the Service’s national wildlife refuges (NWR) and national fish hatcheries (NFH).

LEARN

1,178,000 young people participated in Service environmental education programs focused on the importance of the great outdoors, increasing environmental literacy, and providing opportunities to practice natural and cultural resource stewardship on public lands.

29,600 youth participated in the Junior Duck Stamp Conservation and Design Program that teaches wetlands and waterfowl conservation to students in kindergarten through high school.

6,500 students participated in the construction of new Schoolyard Habitat (SYH) project sites across the country. The program establishes schoolyard wildlife habitats which are used as outdoor classrooms to teach about the importance of environmental stewardship.

1,000 youth were reached by the Urban Bird Treaty Program with migratory bird education and outreach programs in 20 urban areas. The program reached over 500 teachers with bird education workshops designed to increase reach to youth.

SERVE

39,600 volunteers gave generously of their time, expertise and resources to nearly all branches of the Service. Volunteers play an important role in serving the millions of visitors who enjoy public lands managed by the Service.

WORK

2,482 youth, ages 15–25, were employed either directly or through partnerships with nonprofit organizations.

100 nonprofit partnership organizations employed 1,292 youth who worked in all 50 states to help achieve resource management goals.

- 1,190 young people under the age of 25 were employed in permanent and temporary positions. Of these employees:
- 138 students attending high school, college or vocational schools filled Pathways positions with the Service.
 - 541 high school students served in the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) at the Service’s national wildlife refuges, fish hatcheries, field stations, regional offices, and at Headquarters (HQ) in Arlington, VA.





R4 / A preschool student uses a magnifier to look at tree bark.

Play: Developing and enhancing outdoor recreation partnerships that create new and systemic opportunities for outdoor play.

Excellent opportunities for young people to play in the outdoors are provided through the Service's field stations and partnership programs. Millions of young people enjoy experiences outdoors through interpretative programs at national wildlife refuges and fish hatcheries; schoolyard habitats in over 500 schools nationwide; and play spaces such as the Hands-on-Nature Anarchy Zone and Nature Explore Classrooms. Included are a few highlights of these experiences.

Pacific Lamprey Virtual Geocaching and Lamprey Travel Bugs R1 / Dworshak National Fish Hatchery Complex, Ahsahka, Idaho, Nez Perce Tribal Fisheries Kooskia National Fish Hatchery, and Regional Office Portland, Oregon

On a special mission to get youth outside, student intern Lindy Warden and volunteer Cameron Olson used a lamprey replica to help others learn about Pacific lamprey. Students discovered how to use a GPS to locate a pre-established geocache and then deposited a travel bug into that geocache. By scanning the identification tag placed on "Luna the Lamprey," adventurers were directed to a lamprey educational site. The goal is that another geocache enthusiast will find the bug and help migrate it down river to the Pacific Ocean. The Pacific lamprey travel bug is used to promote lamprey education and Connecting People with Nature.



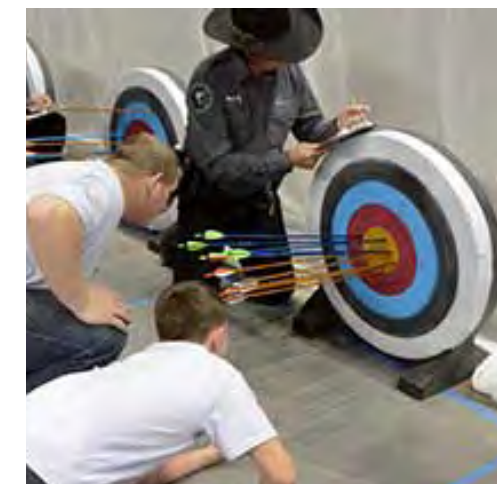
Found it! A student intern is all smiles having found a geocache.



Wooden replica of a Pacific lamprey travel bug.

New Mexico's Third Annual National Archery Draws 600 Youth R2 / Santa Ana Star Center, New Mexico

More than 600 student archers from across New Mexico competed in the third annual National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP) State Tournament in March at the Santa Ana Star Center. The New Mexico Department of Game and Fish hosted the event, provided free training for school instructors, and covered half of the equipment costs. The Service and several partner agencies provided additional support. NASP is made possible in New Mexico and many other states via federal funding from the Service's Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program.



The top student archer inspects his target as his score is tallied. Dan Williams, New Mexico Department Game and Fish

Urban Families Explore Beauty of Lands R3 / Seney National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Michigan

A partnership between the Service and the Detroit-based family outreach program, Our Global Kids, brought a group of families to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to explore firsthand the beauty of their public lands. While at Seney NWR, these families learned about the adaptations of osprey while observing a nesting pair. They also explored the visitor center and captured their own nature images during a photo scavenger hunt. Later in the day, participants chose one afternoon activity: a guided bus tour, fishing along refuge pools, or bicycling refuge roads. In true partnership fashion, the Seney Natural History Association and various refuge volunteers provided lunch and bicycles. *continued on next page*

The Pittman-Robertson Act provides a continual stream of funding for wildlife restoration programs, including hunter education, wildlife surveys, wildlife transplants, and the purchase of and the management of wildlife management areas. These funds come from taxes paid when firearms and ammunition are purchased for hunting purposes.



Our Global Kids get ready to take a bicycle tour of Seney NWR.

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After exploring the refuge, Service staff guided the group to an adjacent Forest Service property where they were able to experience the feel of a bog beneath their feet. For many participants, this trip was their first experience outside of their urban community.

**Hiking Special for Preschool Children
R4 / Alligator River National Wildlife
Refuge (NWR), North Carolina**

Children ages 2-5 gathered every Friday morning at the Alligator River NWR Visitor Center for nature activities. After story time and crafts, these toddlers and preschoolers went with the refuge educator, caretakers, and volunteers for a nature hike. They eagerly adapted to the role of junior naturalists, exploring anything and everything. Each child was given a magnifying glass through which to “observe the world” big and small. Many used walking sticks they had made to help turn over logs and to look for insects and lizards. The two-year program continues to operate, with more than 100 children participating.
(see image page 4)

In the Ready, Set, Bow Workshop, visitors handcrafted their own primitive bows and learned archery.



**Ready, Set, Bow!
R5 / Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge
(NWR), Virginia**

Summer education and interpretive programs at Chincoteague NWR aim to bring kids and families outdoors to foster a connection to wild places. In this spirit, the refuge detoured this summer from the usual bird watching, photography, and ranger talks and instead offered visitors a more hands-on way of connecting with nature. After a refuge staffer attended a bow-making workshop, the visitor services team worked together to combine the bow making techniques with previously learned archery instruction techniques to create a program called Ready, Set, Bow. This creative program was designed to teach visitors about resource management and primitive archery skills. From select-



Students pretend to fly through hoops as red-winged blackbirds at Two Ponds NWR.

ing the wood to shooting techniques, families worked together outdoors using hand tools and making memories. Over 43 participants fashioned 23 bows and practiced shooting with their final creations. The refuge’s day camp, Children in the Woods, also incorporated bow building into their program.

**Migration Obstacle Course Teaches
Urban Students
R6 / Two Ponds National Wildlife Refuge
(NWR), Colorado**

Each year thousands of young urban conservationists connect with nature through experiential learning activities at Two Ponds NWR. The Migration Obstacle Course activity utilizes hoops, ropes, hides, and skulls to simulate obstacles such as power lines, storms, and predators to teach students about the many challenges birds face during migration. Students and teachers have consistently praised this program for effectively engaging participants while developing an appreciation for wildlife and the impact of diminishing habitat. This environmental education program continues to reach students at both public and private schools throughout the Denver metro area.

**Families Discover the Excitement of
Dragonflies
R7 / Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge
(NWR), Alaska**

Envision the sight of a young girl touching an insect for the very first time in her life. Or, imagine the excitement of a toddler sharing, “Look, look!” while holding a shimmering dragonfly in their hands. Over 500 people attended the fifth annual Dragonfly Day, organized by Kanuti NWR. It was a fun-filled day as families discovered dragonflies and wetlands on a sunny day near Fairbanks. This year the event took place at the Chena Lake Recreation Area, attracting a broader audience including families from neighboring military bases. The event was a success as new faces arrived eager to learn about these fascinating insects. Event coordinator and Pathways intern Allyssa Morris observed, “The best part of the day for me was seeing youth smile from ear-to-ear as they caught and handled dragonflies. These kids are our future entomologists!”



A father and daughter work together to catch a dragonfly. USFWS



A young girl touches an insect for the first time. USFWS



Families chase dragonflies during a nature walk. USFWS

**Connecting Tribal Youth with Nature at
Yosemite National Park
R8 / Ventura Fish & Wildlife Office (FWO),
California**

The Service in partnership with the National Park Service joined fourth and fifth graders from the Bishop Paiute Tribe for a three-day summer camp in Yosemite National Park in July. As part of the annual First Bloom event, the camp connected natural resource professionals with Tribal members to share knowledge of fish, wildlife, and plant conservation in the actual habitats upon which they depend. The Tribe’s cultural traditions were shared through games, lessons, and stories about the skills used by Tribal ancestors, including the traditional uses of various plants. The natural resources of Yosemite National Park provided a stunning backdrop for this adventure, instilling a sense of wonder in both the volunteers and students. Service biologist and camp volunteer Lena Chang said, “The scale and majesty of this place inspires the kids in such a way that only nature can.”

**Engagement through Events
HQ / Fish and Aquatic Conservation (FAC),
Virginia**

The Service’s FAC assisted with the coordination and staffing of numerous events throughout the year that engaged young people, including the 2014 Earth Day celebration in Rawlins Park, Washington, D.C. All ages, including day care groups, were able to learn about FAC through various educational exhibits and activities.

FAC staff spoke to local students about fish and other aquatic species in their area. USFWS



Learn:

Providing educational opportunities for the nation's K-12 student population.

The Service has fostered environmental literacy, stewardship, and conservation for decades. Our regional and field employees provide learning opportunities that engage and educate millions of young people, educators, and families through outdoor experiences based on local needs and realities. Volunteers are critically important in environmental education programs and enable the Service to extend its reach. The following summaries provide a snapshot of current, effective programs for building environmental literacy and engaging the nation's young people in conservation.

Service Biologists Assist with Environmental Competition R2 / Southwest Region National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Texas

North America's largest high school environmental competition, Texas Envirothon, was held last April at Clear Lake High School with Service Coastal Ecological Services biologists A. J. Vale and Jeff Hill assisting. Vale and Hill led wildlife seminars covering topics that included threatened and endangered species, migratory birds, and other coastal wildlife. They also prepared and graded evaluations. Each year, high school students throughout Texas compete in the Envirothon competition. The goal of Envirothon is to enhance students' environmental literacy and enable them to make informed decisions regarding their environment. The winning team advances to compete in the national competition. Through several months of study, teams of five students prepare themselves for testing in wildlife biology, forestry, aquatics, soil science, and current environmental issues. Teams must work together to answer questions in outdoor field-testing stations and applied that knowledge to solve real-life problems.



Service biologists receive certificates for their work at the Texas Envirothon. USFWS



Instructors help students prepare for Envirothon

Students gather milkweed seeds on the prairie.



Partner Schools on the Refuge: A Tallgrass Success Story R3 / Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Iowa

The Partner Schools program at Neal Smith NWR brings K-5 students to the refuge twice a year to teach them about the wonders of the tallgrass prairie habitat during four in-depth, hands-on learning sessions. All lessons align with Iowa state education standards. The refuge's environmental education model stresses the importance of phenology, model naturalists, place-based learning, nature journaling, and cultivating a sense of wonder. The program creates future conservationists in the community and provides students with a sense of ownership for their national wildlife refuge. The environmental education program is supported by the Friends of Neal Smith NWR, which obtains grant funding to provide transportation for Partner Schools. The community enthusiastically supports the Partner Schools program, with a waiting list of more children eager to attend.

Helping Cherokee Youth Connect with Tuckasegee River R4 / Asheville Ecological Services Field Office, North Carolina

A reenactment of a traditional Cherokee fish harvest, attended by Cherokee youth, was hosted by the Watershed Association of the Tuckasegee River and Asheville Field Office biologists last June. The students spent the morning rotating through a series of stations

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Service biologist releases sicklefin redhorse as Cherokee youth look on.
Gary Peeples

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focused on water quality and historic Cherokee use of the river. Afterwards, they filed into the water, forming a line across the river, and proceeded to walk downstream, driving fish toward the same historic stone weir used by their ancestors to catch fish. Following the reenactment, they witnessed the release of hundreds of young sicklefin redhorse, a candidate species, raised at the Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery.

below: sicklefin redhorse. Steve Fraley/USGS



Education Program Strengthens Relationship with Native American Youth
R5 / Moosehorn National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Maine

Moosehorn NWR partnered with staff from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Maine Indian Education system to host Camp Sepawonuk (Camp Tomorrow) for 24 middle school students from the Pleasant Point and Indian Township Reservations, located near Perry and Princeton, Maine, respectively. The two-week camp focused on the use of water in a natural environment as a necessary part of communities. While on the refuge, kids learned about water quality monitoring, forestry, archery, and fire management. Students also visited the Calais Water and Sewer Department and took a cruise on the St. Croix River. Camp Sepawonuk not only connected kids to nature, but it also strengthened the working relationship between the refuge and the Passamaquoddy Tribe.

Native American youth are excited to explore Moosehorn NWR



Fourth-grade students wonder, "What lives at the bottom of the stream?"

Mountain Wilds to Wetland Wonders Engage Youth
R6 / Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, Utah

Each year, the Mountain Wilds to Wetland Wonders watershed education program actively engages approximately 1,500 youth in the wonders of nature. Every fourth grader in Box Elder and Cache counties participated in the hands-on exploration of the Bear River watershed. Students investigated water quality, plant communities, and wildlife at two field sites along the course of Bear River. They also compared and contrasted the sites and problem-solved what they could do to help conserve the water resources for wildlife and people. The students especially enjoyed donning mud boots, using kick nets, and rolling rocks in the stream to unearth macro-invertebrates. The youth were highly engaged using the dichotomous key to participate in a classification game. A fourth grade teacher from Discovery Elementary School stated, "Students have more fun and learn more on this field trip than any other in their school career."



Childhood Educators Teach Life Skills through Nature Play
R7 / Fairbanks Fish & Wildlife Field Office, Alaska

The Service partnered with Thread, a network focused on early childhood education, to bring a nature play area to a suburban property adjacent to Thread's teacher training facility. This natural playscape serves as a model for other childcare providers and demonstrates how educators can integrate nature

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Fire-killed spruce logs create a safe, low cost, and natural boundary fence.

Tanana Valley Watershed Association



Fairbanks Youth for Habitat students with their completed willow tunnel. USFWS

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play into their curriculum. The partners relied on donated, recycled, and other locally available materials to emphasize elements of nature while reducing costs. Instead of a chain-link fence, Boreal Journeys Alaska created an attractive and low cost fence out of fire- killed black spruce logs. Thread now has a model outdoor play space to share with other early childcare providers. The real winners are area children who now have a safe place to play, explore, and learn about the wonders of the natural world.



A combination picnic table and play structure made from local spruce logs.

Tanana Valley Watershed Association

Endangered Species Day at the US Botanic Garden
HQ / Ecological Services, Virginia

Gathering over a dozen exhibitors from Department of the Interior agencies and non-government agencies, partners, and schools, Endangered Species Day at the U.S. Botanic Garden had over 2,000 attendees. Participants were treated to interactive and fun nature-themed activities from polar bears to pollinators, all designed to excite and inspire nature exploration with interactivity as the key. Exhibitors enthusiastically provided activities designed to heighten nature awareness, educate youth, and encourage others to become involved with the outdoors. The Endangered Species Day event in Washington, D.C., was just one of many events executed by the Service and its partners around the country.

Endangered Species Booth



*Kids are quizzed on endangered species at the US Forest Service exhibit.
top: Woody Owl learns about pollinator conservation
bottom: Franklin "Buzz" Bee learns how to help monarch butterflies.*



At the EPA station, families learned about the negative impact of pesticides on pollinators.



Jacqueline Flower from Indiana won the State Fish Art Best of Show for a largemouth bass.

Fish Make You Smarter Essay Awards
HQ / Fish and Aquatic Conservation (FAC), Virginia

FAC staff participated in the “Fish Make You Smarter” awards presentation at the 2014 Wildlife Forever, State Fish Art Contest. The art expo was held in Columbia, South Carolina. Students from around the country submitted their artwork and essays. FAC staff also reviewed and selected the winning essays from grades 10-12.

Urban Bird Treaty Program
HQ / Migratory Birds, Virginia

The Urban Bird Treaty program is a unique, collaborative effort between the Service and participating U.S. cities to enhance urban areas for migratory birds that nest, overwinter, or pass through municipal and urban/suburban neighborhoods. The Urban Bird Treaty program has an emphasis on education and outreach programs and includes resources for constructing schoolyard and backyard habitat sites, educating citizens about birds and their conservation in an urban environment, and providing awareness and career development opportunities for young people. The program is currently active in 21 cities. The following examples highlight the program’s activities:



Students gather to begin a birdwatching trip at Eagle Creek Park Ornithology Center.

- **Underserved Students Take Ornithology Field Trip**
R3 / Urban Bird Treaty Program, Indiana
Hundreds of underserved schoolchildren in Indianapolis visited Eagle Creek Park’s Ornithology Center through fully funded or subsidized field trips. These field trips have increased educational bird-related curricula, strengthened outdoor experiences, and provided opportuni-

ties for children to learn more about birds and conservation. The Ornithology Center had over 19,000 visitors, provided 300 programs reaching over 7,000 individuals, and received donations of over 6,000 volunteer hours.



Students participate in Christmas Bird Count 4 Kids.

■ **Bird Watching, Citizen Science, and Music are Part of Urban Bird Treaty R5 / Washington, DC**

Over 100 students and their families participated in a Christmas Bird Count 4 Kids (CBC4Kids) in January. Students and their families took field trips to local birding areas and counted birds, which were later submitted into the citizen science database, eBird. Directed largely towards young scientists and youth birding clubs, CBC4Kids is a less rigorous citizen science adventure. This bird count is more like a game for kids, ages 8-16. Parents and their youngsters join birding team leaders in the fun of celebrating nature and the outdoors. In addition to the January field trip for birdwatching and citizen science, the students at Brent Elementary learned three new songs about the wood thrush and performed these songs at the International Migratory Bird Day festival held in Washington, D.C. in May.

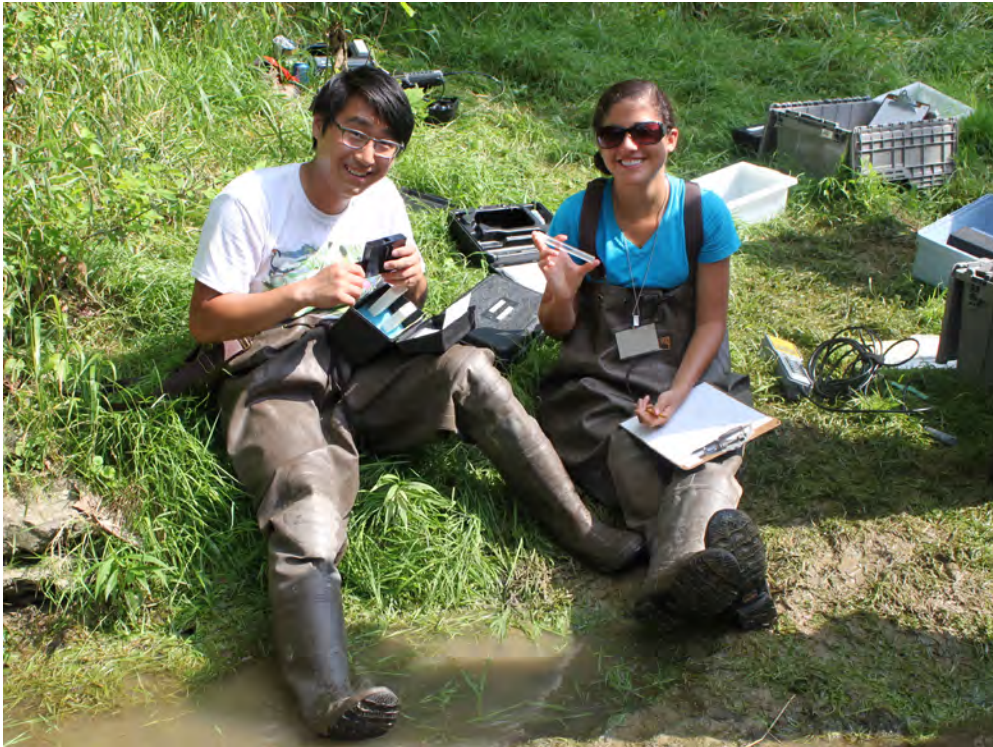


CCS students from the University of Idaho and Service staff on the shores of Payette Lake in McCall, ID.



Conservation Careers Symposium (CCS)
HQ / Office of Diversity and Inclusive Workforce Management (ODIWM), Virginia
HQ / National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), West Virginia

The Conservation Careers Symposium (CCS) is a college youth engagement program collaboratively developed by the Service’s ODIWM and NCTC’s Division of Education and Outreach (DEO). Offering far more than the traditional job fair session, the goals of the program are to introduce students to the Service and its mission; improve the student’s awareness of career opportunities in the Service; increase their knowledge of how to apply for internships and permanent jobs with the Service; and allow for personal follow up dialogue with Service employees. CCS events were held at the schools or on the NCTC campus, reaching 250 top environmental students from 10 universities, including minority-serving institutions. The participating universities included: Oregon State University; University of Vermont; Smithsonian-George Mason University; University of California, Davis; Sewanee: The University of the South; University of Hawaii, Hilo; University of Maryland, College Park; University of Maryland, Eastern Shore; Delaware State University; and Alcorn State University.



Doris Duke Conservation Scholars test water quality. Blaine Eckberg USFWS



eaglets

**Doris Duke (DD) Conservation Scholars
HQ / National Conservation Training
Center (NCTC), West Virginia**

The NCTC Division of Education and Outreach (DEO) helped organize and hosted the DD Conservation Scholars leadership week in June for 25 undergraduate students from the University of Florida, University of Arizona, University of Idaho, North Carolina State University, and Cornell University. The agenda included training sessions on how to overcome barriers to conservation engagement and inclusion; environmental careers in public service; teamwork and problem solving; and skills development in aquatic science, zoology, geographic technology, and outdoor recreation. The scholars learned about the Service and other federal environmental agencies, including their individual missions and employment opportunities.

**Leopold Foundation’s Land Ethic Leaders Program
HQ / National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), West Virginia**

NCTC supported the Leopold Foundation’s Land Ethic Leader program to increase participant diversity and improve the Service’s outreach to underserved groups. The program equips participants with tools to introduce Leopold’s land ethic to a wider audience. It also offers understanding and engagement through dialog about the meaning and value of conservation. During the two-day training, participants explored and deepened their own land ethic together through outdoor observation, environmental service, and reflective discussions. Leaders walked away with new relationships, tools, ideas, and facilitation skills to inspire creative ways to bring the land ethic back to their community. The Service’s support allowed 10 students to participate.

**Sixth Annual Student Climate and
Conservation Congress (SC3)
HQ / National Conservation Training
Center (NCTC), West Virginia**

NCTC hosted the sixth annual SC3 in June. SC3 is a collaborative effort with the Green Schools Alliance, a coalition of over 3,000 schools in the United States and around the globe, all motivated to improve the ecological sustainability of their schools. To better serve their schools and home communities, students were empowered to become environmental leaders, by gaining knowledge, skills, and the necessary tools to address natural resource challenges. Prominent leaders from the Service, academia, and non-governmental agencies joined a talented faculty from schools around the country to present ideas and mentor students. Each year since 2009, SC3 has brought together 100 of the best and brightest high school student leaders, individually selected by their schools to take part in developing an enhanced understanding of conservation science and sustainability. SC3 participants represent a broad diversity of youth from all socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicities.



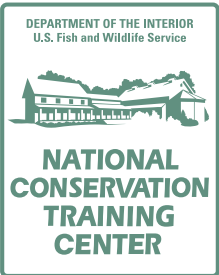
“SC3 had quickly become one of my most rewarding experiences. I met students from the East Coast, West Coast, Canada, and China, all who had accomplished incredible things at their schools.”



Young people learn about small mammals on Conservation Connect.

**Conservation Connect
HQ / National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), West Virginia**

Conservation Connect is a series of short webcasts that target youth audiences, ages 9-13, to connect the classroom to the Service and other environmentally-focused organizations. Each episode highlights a wildlife species, a conservation career, and a technology used to study and protect wildlife. From learning about manatees through live underwater cameras, to hearing from law enforcement officers describe strategies for addressing the illegal poaching of wildlife, students are given a glimpse into the Service, future careers, and conservation issues. Instructor resources are available after each episode.





R7 /After banding, a volunteer releases a songbird.

Serve:

Expanding volunteer opportunities by leveraging the expertise of partners.

Volunteers, Friends groups, and partners are valuable allies of the Service and vital to fulfilling our mission, bringing critically important resources for youth programming throughout the Service. Each year these individuals and groups give generously of their time, expertise, and resources to the National Wildlife Refuge System, the National Fish Hatchery System, the Migratory Bird Program, the Office of Law Enforcement, Ecological Services, and the National Conservation Training Center. They play an important role in serving the more than 47 million visitors who enjoy public lands managed by the Service. The following examples highlight a few of the successes in FY 2014.

Invaluable Study Monitors Trumpeter Swans

R1 / Grays Lake National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Idaho

In partnership with Western Oregon University and Oregon State University, Grays Lake NWR sponsored seasonal biological volunteers to monitor the phenology of the refuge population of nesting trumpeter swans, radio tag cygnets, and monitor cygnet survival rates. This year, volunteers monitored eight nests and outfitted seven cygnets from three of those nests with VHF radio transmitters. This study afforded the refuge an invaluable opportunity to monitor the life history of a key focal species of the rocky mountain ecosystem, while providing undergraduate wildlife students with valuable biological monitoring experience within the refuge system.



swan eggs
Nathan Graff, USFWS



Volunteers assist refuge biologist in candling swan eggs to determine hatch date.



A radio transmitter is attached to a one-day old trumpeter swan cygnet.



trumpeter swan
Steve Hillebrand/USFWS

Native American Urban Youth Corps Hosted by Valle de Oro NWR R2 / Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), New Mexico

In partnership with the Conservation Legacy, La Plazita Institute, Inc., and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Service developed a fall conservation service project for a field crew of eight Native American youth participants at Valle de Oro NWR. Through the Bureau of Indian Affairs and with support from a \$25,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the La Plazita Native American Urban Corps was formed. The grant’s purpose was to provide learning opportunities for youth, ages 16-25, as they worked on conservation projects on Tribal and Ancestral lands and waters. At Valle de Oro NWR, the crew was involved in a variety of important tasks including building trails, monitoring groundwater wells, conducting cleanups, performing community outreach, and designing and painting a mural.

The Native American Urban Youth Corps in front of their mural. USFWS



A family prepares to fish during the fourth annual Detroit River Kids Fishing Festival. Detroit River Front Conservancy



Volunteers Support Kids Fishing Festival R3 / Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office, Michigan

Approximately 100 volunteers from the Alpena Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office came out to support the fourth annual Detroit River Kids Fishing Festival. The celebration promotes aquatic stewardship and fishing skills to area children and adults. The list of volunteers and supporters for the event grows each year. Nearly 2,000 children have participated in this event since its inception, making lasting memories and establishing lasting ties with the outdoors. Volunteers taught children fishing basics, boating safety, and educated them about invasive species in the Great Lakes.



Volunteers planting marsh grass.

Marsh Grass Planting a Success R4 / Big Branch Marsh National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Louisiana

Despite the challenges of two broken air boats and four rain delays, the Big Branch Marsh NWR completed the project of planting 57,000 marsh plants, with the help of 151 volunteers in seven days over 25 acres. This project will increase soil stability in the inter-tidal mud flats while providing some storm surge protection to the local community and improving crucial habitat for local wildlife. The planting would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of many volunteers and the project partner, Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana (CRCL). The CRCL provided the plants and volunteer network that recruited heavily from the students at Tulane and Louisiana State University.

Volunteers Restore 11 Acres of Riparian Habitat R5 / Lake Champlain Fish and Wildlife Resources Office, Vermont

The Vermont Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program works with conservation partners throughout the state to restore wildlife habitat in critical areas. In the spring, volunteers donated nearly 500 hours of labor to six riparian habitat restoration projects. Volunteers from local grade schools and the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps planted over 3,000 trees, restoring 11 acres of riparian-forested habitat and 1.7 miles of river shoreline. These projects will benefit many migratory birds and fish species. Migratory birds utilize forested riparian areas for perching, nesting, foraging, and travel corridors. Fish, such as brook trout and landlocked Atlantic salmon, benefit from the shade and corresponding lowered water temperatures provided by forested riparian areas. Volunteers worked side-by-side with Service biologists, getting a unique opportunity to learn firsthand about wildlife conservation while contributing to valuable restoration projects in their local communities.

Two youth volunteers install willow fascines in a riparian restoration area.



A group of Scouts pose with the elk antlers they collected. Credit: Lori Iverson / USFWS

Annual Antler Auction Provides Essential Funding R6 / National Elk Refuge, Wyoming

More than 200 Jackson District Boy Scouts and adult leaders worked for nearly 2,000 hours with National Elk Refuge personnel during the annual antler auction project. Thousands of pounds of antlers were sold at the auction within two to three hours, with Scouts taking turns hauling bundles of antlers up to the stage as the bidding took place. The money raised from the antler sale provides essential funding for habitat enhancement projects on the refuge.

A Scout patiently stands on stage while bidding is in progress





Kodiak volunteers gave their time and creativity for conservation.
Tim Knudson/USFWS

Youth Volunteers are Adventurers for Conservation
R7 / Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Alaska

Youth contributed nearly 10,000 hours of their time and creativity for conservation. For three short months during the summer, nine volunteers joined Service-deployed field teams across Alaska to study wildlife. To prepare, the teams attended weeks of training; lived in remote field camps; worked through 19 hours of daylight; and navigated rugged terrain, warning bears of their approach. While some of these brave souls are paid technicians, many accomplishments would not have been possible without the help of youth volunteers. These adventurers served upwards of 80 hours per week hoping to build career experiences and see some wildlife. They researched invasive plants, the seabirds Kittlitz's murrelets, other sea and land birds, the Kodiak brown bear, and salmon. Four additional volunteers spent their summer teaching local children about Kodiak's plants and animals.



A research team take measurements before fitting a bear with a GPS collar at Kodiak NWR.



Volunteers are tremendous help.



A volunteer at Kodiak NWR with his research subject, a bear.



Scarelli Elementary School students during field day.

Sustainable Ranching and Conservation for Students
R8 / Nevada Fish and Wildlife Office (FWO), Nevada

Over 80 students from Scarselli Elementary School learned about sustainable ranching and conservation as part of the inaugural Ranching and Wildlife Program field day in Carson Valley last May. Nevada FWO, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), hosted the event. The field day took place on TNC's 850 acre River Fork working ranch and preserve in Minden, Nevada. The children rotated around five different stations to learn about the importance of pollinators, including birds, monarch butterflies, and bees. Students discovered the role of pollination in agriculture. They also learned roping and branding skills, cattle management, vermicomposting, and watershed conservation. All of this was coordinated and led by 12 Future Farmers of America students from Douglas High School.



Pollinators and Pollinator Week
HQ / Fish and Aquatic Conservation, Virginia

Numerous Service staff worked together to educate others about the value of pollinators and their habitat. Staff around the country, including Sacramento, CA, gave over 85 pollinator presentations, handed out more than 50 brochures, and created activities. They were also responsible for three youth-oriented pollinator camps and provided 31 consultations to develop gardens and schoolyard habitats.

All smiles helping with pollinator habitat restoration in Sacramento, CA.
Karleen Vollherbst/USFWS





YCC interns conduct water monitoring in Willapa Bay.

Work:

Develop opportunities for the next generation of lifelong conservation stewards through public and private partnerships in support of the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps.

Young people are the conservation leaders of tomorrow, and through a variety of employment programs, qualified young people are prepared and given opportunities to enter careers in conservation. Using a variety of employment authorities, and working with nearly 100 nonprofit partners, the Service employed 2,482 youth ages 15–25 in FY 2014. The following activities highlight key employment efforts.



DFP fellows locating a radio-tagged bog turtle in a Maryland wetland. (left: baby bog turtle. Rosie Walunas/USFWS)

Directorate Resource Assistant Fellows Program (DFP)
HQ / National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), West Virginia
HQ / Budget, Planning, and Human Capital (BPHC), Virginia
HQ / Office of Diversity and Inclusive Workforce Management (ODIWM), Virginia

The Service launched the Directorate Resource Assistant Fellows Program (DFP) in FY 2014, a new fellowship program for top undergraduate and graduate students. The program was spearheaded by the Deputy Director and NCTC and worked in partnership with BPHC and ODIWM to implement. The DFP is part of an aggressive recruitment campaign to increase diversity in the Service's applicant pools. Successful completion of the program's internship requirements and the fellow's graduation from an accredited college earns students direct hiring eligibility status

with the Service. The program's internship must be a minimum of 11 weeks of full-time work on an individualized Service-identified and supervised project that meets the qualifications of a rigorous program. After receiving a five-day

orientation to the Service at NCTC, 30 fellows successfully completed their DFP summer program in FY 2014. One of the participants subsequently graduated and was placed with the Service's Office of International Affairs.

Regional Recruiters

HQ / Office of Diversity and Inclusive Workforce Management

The Service employs nine recruiters (one in HQ and one in each region) to work with hiring officials and partners to execute strategies that reach targeted groups of women, minorities, and people with disabilities to increase the diversity of pools of qualified candidates from which the Service fills vacancies. The Regional Recruiters supported the DFP and numerous Career Conservation Symposiums held around the country.

Partnership Employment

Nonprofit organizations working in partnership with field stations, regional, and headquarters’ offices employed one-half of the youth who worked on Service-related projects in FY 2014. Some of these relationships involve multiple organizations and funding sources to provide opportunities for youth that otherwise could not be supported. Our partners come in all shapes and sizes, from the large nationally known Student Conservation Association (SCA) and AmeriCorps, to our small locally based non-profit Refuge Friends’ groups; from high schools to universities; and from state and local programs to tribal entities.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Youth Employment Partners

- Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute
American Conservation Experience
AmeriCorps
Anchorage Park Foundation
Arrupe Corporate Work Study Program
Audubon Society of NH
Barrow Arctic Science Consortium
Bayfield County Land and Water Conservation Department
Buffalo State College
Canisius College
City of Columbia Missouri
Cochise College
Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa
Living Classroom Foundation
Delmarva Resource Conservation and Development Council
Ding Darling Wildlife Society
Fairbanks Soil and Water Conservation District
Fairfax County, Virginia
Friends of Arthur R. Marxhall Loxahatchee NWR
Friends of Deer Flat Wildlife Refuge
Friends of Florida Panther NWR
Friends of Neal Smith NWR
Friends of the Ridgefield NWR
Friends of the Rydell Refuge Association
Friends of Willamette Valley
Great River Greening
Greening Youth Foundation
Groundwork Denver
Humboldt State University
Iowa Natural Heritage
Itasca Community College
Job Corps
Kuskowim Native Association
Maine Audubon
McHenry County Conservation District
Merritt Island Wildlife Association
Mile High Youth Corps
Minnesota State University Mankato
Montana Conservation Corps
Murray State College
National Aquarium
National Audubon Society
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
National Great Rivers and Research Educational Center
National Park Service
New Mexico State University
Northern Arizona University
- Northland College
Northwest Youth Corps
Northwoods Stewardship Center
Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
Oregon State University
Panama Ecological Partner Organization
Princeton University
Providence Department of Parks and Recreation
Partnership for Providence Parks
Refuge Friends Inc.
River Partners
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Saint Michaels College
Salmon Valley Stewardship
San Joaquin Regional Conservation Corps
Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation
Seney Natural History Association
Shoreline Education for Awareness
Southwest Conservation Corps
Southwestern Oklahoma State University
St. Joseph the Worker
Stephen F. Austin State University
Student Conservation Association
State University of New York Brockport
State University of New York Buffalo
State University of New York Fredonia
Texas A&M
Texas Tech University
The Nature Conservancy
The Wildlife Society
University of Arizona
University of Delaware
University of Georgia
University of Maine
University of Maine, Sparrow Research
University of North Carolina Wilmington
University of South Florida
University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point
USDA APHIS Wildlife Services
Utah State University
Friends of St Croix Wetland Management District
Vermont Institute of Natural Science
Viterbo University
Western Maryland Research and Conservation Development Council
Wildlife and Habitat Conservation Internship
YMCA of Klamath Falls



The Idaho Fish Health Center teams up with Nez Perce Tribal fisheries biologists and interns.

Partnership with Nez Perce Tribe
Department of Fisheries Resource
Management (DFRM)
R1 / Dworshak National Fish
Hatchery Complex (NFH), Idaho

The Nez Perce Tribe high school and college students participated in the DFRM Tribal Intern Development Program. Each year high school and college students are employed during the summer months to assist with fisheries projects. Interns also received career development, scholarships, mentoring, and employment opportunities. They worked at several hatchery duty stations and learned about salmonid aquaculture, applied science, math, communications and employment skills. Several of these students have progressed to technical or college careers and found employment within various divisions of DFRM.

Pathway student teaches Nez Perce Tribal interns how to inject Pacific Lamprey with antibiotics.



Houston Urban Partnership is Growing
R2 / Houston Urban Wildlife Refuge
Partnership, Texas

The Houston Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership gives young people like Karina Sustaita a chance to experience refuges. Although she had worked for the Student Conservation Association in Houston for two years, Karina had never visited a refuge until last August, when she had the opportunity to work at four refuges. At San Bernard NWR, Karina did trail work and marveled over golden orb-weaver spiders. At Trinity River NWR, she cleared trails and removed cypress trees. At Attwater Prairie Chicken NWR, Karina collected native seeds and learned about the refuge’s namesake endangered birds. At Anahuac NWR, she planted cordgrass. The Service established the Houston Urban Partnership last year, and now 60 organizations have expressed interest in being involved.

above: prairie chicken. Tom Kelley/USFWS
SCA intern works on a trail at San Bernard NWR.



Data Collected Establishes Baseline on Aquatic Animals R4 / Warm Springs Fish Technology Center, Georgia

Student Conservation Association (SCA) intern Jason Hickson assisted the Warm Springs Fish Technology Center by collecting baseline information on aquatic animals and their habitat. Samples were taken for the invasive fungal pathogen chytrid in southern Appalachian streams. The data is being used to examine climate change effects across the landscape and to investigate the influence of aquatic invasive species on native ecosystems. The stewardship project supported the Warm Springs Fish Health Program.



SCA intern collects data during field exercise.

Youth Gain Valuable Field Experience and Team Spirit R6 / Audubon Wetland Management District, North Dakota

Two crews from Conservation Corps Minnesota and Iowa reduced invasive species on an Audubon Wetland Management District. The crews removed Russian olive, Siberian elm, and hounds tongue by hand picking, cutting, and applying herbicides. The crews successfully treated over 1,000 acres of grasslands for these invasive species in July and September. The youth also assisted with a public conservation education event. While the crews helped the District, they gained valuable field experience working long hours in remote areas, which required a great deal of teamwork. The youth also attended presentations on refuge management, wetland and grassland easement program, and on how to apply for Federal jobs.



Fairfax Family4 Kids group visiting the Patuxent National Wildlife Refuge

Motivated Students Restore Habitats R8 / Tijuana Slough National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), California

Twelve energetic college students made the most out of their spring break this year by planting 485 plants and restoring two acres of wetland habitats on the Tijuana Slough NWR. The students were part of the Boulder Alternative Breaks Program through the University of Colorado (CU) - Boulder. The group removed invasive weeds and cleaned up the Monument Mesa native plant gardens at Borderfield State Park. They pulled stubborn mustard weeds, repaired fence adjacent to the Goat Canyon sediment basins, and removed a small dumpster's worth of trash from around the perimeter of the basins. Staff enjoyed working with these students during their "alternative break" from CU Bolder. The break provided students opportunities to learn about social and environmental justice issues faced by members of diverse communities through education and service.

Summer Internship Program Gives Young Adults Confidence HQ / Budget, Planning, and Human Capital (BPHC), Virginia

In partnership with Fairfax Families 4 Kids, and the award-winning Conservation4-Youth Summer Internship Program, the Service gave nine young adults in the local foster care system practical work experience in conservation biology and administrative support. These youth gained confidence through on-the-job training, mentoring, and shadowing assignments. Envisioned by the Service's Assistant Director of Budget, Planning and Human Capital, the program came together in partnership with two county organizations and was implemented throughout nine Service programs. Highlights included a visit from the Raptor Conservancy of Virginia to meet a selection of local raptors; a presentation from a local marine biologist who brought along an array of live sea animals; and an interactive workshop with a human resources officer about job interviewing tips and resume writing. The group also traveled to Patuxent NWR to experience the vital role that wildlife refuges play in preserving the diversity of wildlife and plant life and enjoyed a trip to the Smithsonian's Natural History Museum.



Wilderness fellow works during an outreach event at Tamarac NWR. below: common tern egg and chicks. USFWS

Wilderness Fellows Partnership Provides Wilderness Assessments HQ / Division of Natural Resources, Virginia

As the country celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Wilderness Act, six Wilderness Fellows were hired in partnership with the American Conservation Experience. These fellows were tasked with evaluating the impacts of nearby development, climate change, management actions, and other factors on wilderness character to better ensure the preservation of these wild areas for future generations. Fellows spent six months on a wilderness refuge, taking training courses, developing an inventory and monitoring strategy, and producing baseline data about wilderness character. They worked alongside refuge and regional office staff, external scientists, and others involved in wilderness assessments. Morgan Gantz worked on the Tamarac wilderness within the Tamarac NWR. She also helped refuge staff count common tern eggs and chicks on the smallest refuge in the Refuge system, Mille Lacs NWR, and led visitors on a wilderness photo safari into the Tamarac wilderness.



Youth Conservation Corps (YCC)

Over 500 high school students served in the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) at the Service's national wildlife refuges, fish hatcheries, field stations, regional offices, and Headquarters in Arlington, VA in FY 2014. These summer jobs are available to students ages 15-18, and for many, it is the first paying job they have ever had. Service staffs typically recruit students in local communities through newspaper announcements, high school job fairs, science classes and clubs, state labor offices, or during special visits to the schools.

Urban YCC Assists with Cleanup R3 / Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Minnesota

Through a partnership between the Midwest Region and the McHenry County Conservation District, the Hackmatack NWR hired its first Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) during the summer. The refuge is located near Chicago and is the newest refuge established in the Midwest Region. The YCC crew worked on the refuge and other conservation lands removing old fence line, performing habitat restoration, and cleaning up former dumping areas.

Wildlife biologist talks to YCC crew about tracking the state-listed ornate box turtle.



YCC Crews Gain Experience at the Conte Refuge
R5 / Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and Stewart B. McKinney NWR, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Connecticut
The Silvio O. Conte and Stewart B. McKinney NWRs hosted five Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) crews including two in Massachusetts, and one each in New Hampshire, Vermont, and Connecticut. For the first time, the refuge hosted an urban YCC crew from Springfield, MA. These crews participated in a variety of projects including trail construction and maintenance, invasive plant control, infrastructure repair, and habitat enhancement. The Springfield YCC members had unique experiences assisting master gardeners at the Springfield Museums gardens, working in the City of Springfield tree nursery, and planting over 200 trees in areas damaged by a 2011 tornado.



Refuge's Springfield YCC crew plant trees in an area that was damaged by a 2011 tornado.

YCC Gives Refuge Support
R1 / Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), Idaho
An important component of Kootenai NWR's Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) program is the completion of a community support project. Since the refuge maintains an excellent working relationship/partnership with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), the YCC crew repaired and painted IDFG's wildlife exhibit for the Boundary County fair. Another partnership that the refuge has sustained over the years is with the Northwest Birds of Prey, a non-profit organization dedicated to the rehabilitation and education about the various raptors that inhabit the Northwest. In July, the YCC crew and others traveled to St. Maries, Idaho, to collect salvaged road kill for food for the wild birds. Following a tour of the facility and an educational program about the birds, the large work crew cleaned up brush and windstorm debris, all fire hazards, and provided assistance with aviary repairs.



Crew with Beauty, an injured female bald eagle at the Birds of Prey Northwest facility.



Northwest Birds of Prey golden eagle, Dakota.



Brett Billings/USFWS

Pathways

The Service's Pathways Program employed 138 students attending college or vocational schools in FY 2014. The Pathways program, which replaced the former Student Education Employment Program in FY 2013, provides students in high school, college, trade school and other qualifying educational institutions with paid opportunities to work in federal agencies and explore careers while completing their education.

National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) "Vision" Program
HQ / Division of Visitor Services and Communications, Virginia

The NWRS Report, Conserving the Future: Wildlife Refuges and the Next Generation, is the result of a vision to enhance the relevance of the refuge system to a rapidly changing America, by inspiring the people to help the Service leave a legacy of abundant and healthy wildlife and wild lands for future generations to enjoy. An integral player, Heather Jeru, became the first Student Conservation Association intern and later became a contractor in the early stages of the Conserving the Future process. She was eventually hired as a Pathways student to lead communications and support implementation of Conserving the Future, with a strong emphasis on supporting the work of

the new Urban Wildlife Refuge Program and the Leadership Development Council. Her creativity and dedication is directly supporting the future success and relevancy of the Refuge System.

NWRS Headquarters Pathways intern.





Team building activity with SC3 youth. Austin Phillips/USFWS

Coordination, Communication, and Training

Coordination and Communication

DOI Interagency Youth Team HQ / National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), West Virginia

The Department abolished the Youth Partnership and Service Office in FY 2014 and issued *Order 3332 Engaging the Next Generation* along with general implementation, monitoring, and reporting guidance. The order further instructed the Bureaus to build upon the outstanding work and programs already operating at local offices and units around the country. The Department also pursued a comprehensive strategy to encourage millions of young people to play, learn, serve, and work outdoors. The Service stepped forward in response to requests from former Bureau Youth Task Force members to provide inter-bureau coordination for the initiative. Bureau representatives continue to meet voluntarily under the moniker DOI Interagency Youth Team to share information, foster understanding, and create efficiencies to plan and implement the Order. The Service compiles agendas beforehand, facilitates the meeting, and drafts and distributes minutes afterwards.

Connecting People with Nature (CPWN) Creates Meaningful Experiences in Nature HQ / National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), West Virginia

CPWN-Working Group (CPWN-WG) continues to carry out its priority to address the American public's declining interactions with nature by creating opportunities for people to have enjoyable and meaningful experiences in the outdoors. The group coordinated with the Service's Urban Wildlife Conservation Program and developed the Connecting People with Nature-Urban Intersect Grant Request for Proposal (RFP). The competitive grant program awarded \$25,000 to a single Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership that demonstrated a strong intersection between CPWN and the Urban Wildlife Conservation Program's goals. The recipient was the Houston Urban Partnership for their nature gardens proposal. All CPWN regions continued to promote and implement connecting youth with nature activities throughout their regions, with the knowledge that the connection is a foundational piece for developing the next generation of conservation leaders.

Connecting People with Nature Let's Go Outside Website HQ / National Conservation Training Center (NCTC), West Virginia

The Let's Go Outside website is a dynamic resource for children, parents, educators, and youth group leaders, as part of the Connecting People with Nature priority. The site encourages its audience to go outside and connect with nature, learn about the environment and conservation, and develop a greater appreciation of the Service including volunteer opportunities and Service careers. The site includes a wide-range of topics with links to other websites, as well as a list of current events taking place at refuges.



<http://www.fws.gov/letsgooutside/>

Connecting People with Nature National Working Group Members

Regions

Region 1	Nancy Pollot	nancy_pollot@fws.gov
Region 2	Art Needleman	art_a_needleman@fws.gov
Region 3	Tim Smigielski	tim_smigielski@fws.gov
Region 4	Kevin Lowry	kevin_lowry@fws.gov
Region 5	Kate Toniolo	kate_toniolo@fws.gov
Region 6	Melissa Burns	melissa_burns@fws.gov
Region 7	Laurel Devaney	laurel_devaney@fws.gov
Region 8	DC Carr	derick_carr@fws.gov

Headquarters

Endangered Species	Robin Nims Elliott	robin_nimselliott@fws.gov
Fish and Aquatic Conservation	Denise Wagner	densie_wagner@fws.gov
Law Enforcement	Michael Iacomini	michael_iacomini@fws.gov
Migratory Birds	Rachel Levin	rachel_levin@fws.gov
National Conservation Training Center	Georgia Jeppesen	georgia_jeppesen@fws.gov
National Wildlife Refuge System	Marcia Pradines	marcia_pradines@fws.gov



Youth Coordination Team (YCT)
HQ / National Conservation Training
Center (NCTC), West Virginia

The YCT coordinates the Service’s employment programs and activities for youth, ages 15-25. Key programs include Youth Conservation Corps, Pathways, and youth employed through partnerships. With representatives from every region and most headquarters programs, the group meets monthly on conference calls to coordinate departmental reporting requirements, share strategies for increasing the number of youth employed each year, and provide guidance to the development of departmental policy initiatives.



Potomac River. Rachel Molenda/USFWS

Youth Coordination Team Members

Regions		
Region 1	Bob Peyton	bob_peyton@fws.gov
Region 2	Gary Hutchison	gary_hutchison@fws.gov
Region 3	Ann Marie Chapman	annmarie_chapmen@fws.gov
Region 4	Sharon Fuller	sharon_fuller@fws.gov
Region 5	Kate Toniolo	kate_toniolo@fws.gov
Region 6	Amy Thornburg	amy_thornburg@fws.gov
Region 7	Kristen Gilbert	kristen_gilbert@fws.gov
Region 8	Dara Rodriguez	dara_rodriguez@fws.gov
Headquarters		
Diversity Inclusive Workforce Management	Julia Bumbaca	julia_bumbaca@fws.gov
Ecological Services	Robins Nims Elliott	robin_nimselliott@fws.gov
Fish and Aquatic Conservation	Robert Pos	robert_pos@fws.gov
Human Capital Management	Kelly Billote	kelly_billote@fws.gov
Migratory Birds	Alicia King	alicia_king@fws.gov
National Conservation Training Center	Drew Burnett	drew_burnett@fws.gov
National Wildlife Refuge System	Phil LePelch	phil_lepelch@fws.gov

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Growing
the Next Generation Google Site
R3 & R7 / Youth Coordination Team
Representatives

Under the leadership of the Youth Coordination Team representatives in R3 and R7, the Service launched a new Google site to assist hiring managers navigate the complex array of employment authorities available for hiring youth in the Service. The site aims to be the Service’s most comprehensive internal resource on engaging youth in the agency’s wildlife conservation mission.

VOICES (Visitor Outreach, Interpretation,
Communication, and Educational
Services)
HQ / National Conservation Training
Center (NCTC), West Virginia

VOICES is an electronic newsletter published bimonthly by the Division of Education and Outreach, with more than 400 subscribed Service employees. Its purpose is to distribute valuable information and resources to Service employees working to engage and educate young people. Topics include educational resources, professional development, conferences, programs, workshops, grants, and award recognition. The colorful email format, with brief write-ups, photos, and videos, features “live” links so Service staff can go directly to the source and further enhance their knowledge.

Training

The Division of Education and Outreach Professional Development Branch builds capacity within the Service that supports the Youth in the Great Outdoors through trainings and communities of practice through the Branch’s three curriculum strands of environmental education, youth outdoor skills, and youth leadership and supervision. The Professional Development Branch also provides web and social media tools targeted to a young audience to promote outdoor experiences and conservation internships and job opportunities and shares these trainings and resources with other Department bureaus and partners. The Branch manages grants, cooperative agreements, and intra-governmental agreements that support partnership and outreach efforts. Where applicable, the Branch builds diversity and inclusion into all trainings, programs, and products.

woodpoppy. Ryan Hagerty/USFWS



OUT8064 Building Urban Wildlife
Habitat with Youth
HQ / National Conservation Training
Center (NCTC), West Virginia

This blended learning course was designed to empower conservation professionals to work with national and local youth corps organizations to engage young people. Participants received experience in job training, conservation skills, and leadership opportunities through community wildlife habitat enhancement, restoration, and/or monitoring projects in urban areas. Participants actively engaged in project planning with local partners in the host community and begin drafting a plan for their own community. The Southeast Regional Office hosted the course in Atlanta, GA, where participants visited Trees Atlanta and worked with the West Atlanta Watershed Alliance (WAWA). One participant stated, “This was one of the best NCTC courses I’ve taken. Being in the field and having direct interactions and collaborations with Trees Atlanta and WAWA was fantastic and key to the experience.”

OUT8065 Youth Mentored Hunting/Fishing
Program
HQ / National Conservation Training
Center (NCTC), West Virginia

This course, developed in partnership with Florida Fish and Wildlife and the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), provided opportunities to engage diverse youth audiences. Participants gain skills and learn about tools for the development and/or enhancement of youth-mentored hunting and fishing programs. Course participants may build partnerships with established mentoring organizations, including Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Pass it on Outdoors, and the African American Hunting Association. Students engage in instructional best practices and leave the course able to implement their own hunting and fishing plans. Participant and Refuge Manager Michael Horne from Wallkill National Wildlife Refuge said, “When I returned to Wallkill with that bolstered enthusiasm and tools derived from the presenters, our team was able to quickly and effectively pull together our first, yet highly successful, mentored youth hunt at Wallkill in cooperation with our local NWTf chapter. The class was the road map that enabled us to pull it all together so quickly.”



FWS participants remove invasive plants with Trees Atlanta.



Participants completed the course, Building Urban Wildlife Habitat.

Mentoring youth for hunting.
National Wild Turkey Federation



Mentoring firearm safety at Wallkill
NWR. USFWS





SC3 at the National Conservation Training Center, Potomac River kayak. Ryan Hagerty/USFWS

Conclusion

This report demonstrates the deep integration of youth programs throughout the Service, from field stations, fish hatcheries, national wildlife refuges, wetland management districts, waterfowl production areas, as well as regional and national program offices.

As the Service confronts the decreasing interest in the outdoor environment among our nation's young people, the importance of building the next generation of conservation leaders to join our ranks and tackle future, complex conservation challenges becomes all the more important. The Service is proud of the comprehensive nature of our programs that reached millions of young people, their educators, and their families this year.

We will build on this success, improve our FY 2015 programs, and continue to share our experiences more broadly, always with the goal of involving more young people in the important mission we strive to meet: working with people to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people.



SC3 at the National Conservation Training Center, along the Potomac River. Ryan Hagerty/USFWS

“All wanted the same goal, but they weren’t afraid to embrace conflict and debate about potential solutions in policy, technology, or mindset. They had fears but not cynicism; they were realistic but not hopeless. They were confident that we were the generation that was going to change the world, and when that type of energy is present, it’s easy to believe that we are.”
(Excerpt taken from Student Climate and Conservation Congress participant blog.)



Children learn about acorns growing into mighty oak trees. Ryan Hagerty/USFWS